



# Hartford Foundation

FOR PUBLIC GIVING

## Hartford Foundation for Public Giving Testimony

### HB 5037 AAC the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023 Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services

#### Appropriations Committee Thursday, February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Good afternoon, Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Hartley, Representative Dathan, Representative Nolan, Senator Miner, Representative France, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee. The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving is grateful for the opportunity to submit testimony **on HB 5037 AAC the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023.**

**The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving is the community foundation for the 29-town Greater Hartford region.** As a community foundation, we manage approximately \$1 billion in assets. In the past two years, the Foundation has distributed a record-breaking \$97 million in grants to promote equitable opportunity for all residents in our region. Made possible by the gifts of generous individuals, families and organizations, the Foundation has awarded grants of more than \$894 million since its founding in 1925.

As part of our efforts to dismantle structural racism and improve social and economic mobility for Black and Latinx residents of Greater Hartford, the Hartford Foundation seeks to **increase the number of Hartford residents living in higher opportunity neighborhoods.** Higher opportunity neighborhoods are defined by a variety of factors, including low unemployment, better performing schools, lower crime and greater availability of quality, affordable housing stock.

The Hartford Foundation seeks to increase the number of Hartford residents living in higher opportunity neighborhoods both by increasing opportunities in Hartford neighborhoods and by increasing the ability of Hartford residents to move to other higher opportunity areas throughout the Greater Hartford region if they so choose. In order to support these outcomes, the Foundation invests in efforts designed to increase the stability, availability, and quality of affordable housing in the Greater Hartford region; align and leverage additional investment in Hartford neighborhoods; and increase social strength and connectedness of Hartford neighborhoods. COVID has reinforced the need for all of us to live in safe, stable homes, in safe, stable neighborhoods, in safe, stable communities.

Connecticut has made significant progress in addressing homelessness, but the challenges in finding and keeping affordable permanent housing persist. While the homeless population has decreased in Connecticut, every day approximately 3,000 people still don't have a home of their own. In Hartford, 57 percent of renters spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing, leaving little to cover other expenses such as transportation, childcare, or food.

10 Columbus Boulevard, 8th Floor  
Hartford, CT 06106

860-548-1888  
fax 860-249-3561  
[www.hfpg.org](http://www.hfpg.org)



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Significant portions of our past and current investments have focused on preventing and reducing homelessness in Greater Hartford. On an annual basis, the Foundation awards approximately \$1 million to local nonprofit organizations to provide access to emergency shelter, housing subsidies, case management, eviction prevention and landlord negotiation, employment services, and other housing services to residents at-risk or experiencing homelessness. This includes support to the Greater Hartford Coordinated Access Network for rapid re-housing services during the winter.

Public commitment must address the interplay of basic human needs, including access to food, mental and physical health care services, housing and other needs, and provide adequate support to the nonprofit organizations providing these services.

**The Foundation asks that members of the committee support the following proposals and expansions from the Governor's budget from the Governor's budget for the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS):**

- The preservation of DMHAS' Housing Supports and Services line at \$23.404 million;
- An additional \$13.34 million in FY 23 (*including \$5.26 million increase in DMHAS' Housing Supports and Services line, and \$8.08 million at DOH*) to [provide homeless and housing service organizations funding](#) for adequate wages, benefits, and professional development for front line workers, increasing rent and utility costs, and better access to technology;
- The Governor's proposed use of \$2.8 million of ARPA (\$1.1m FY23; \$1.1m FY24; \$562,000 FY25) for [wrap-around services](#) for 150 units of supportive housing. Supportive services are an **ongoing need and require a permanent investment**, and as such we are asking Appropriations to **support an increase** in DMHAS' Housing Supports and Services line of \$2.25 million in FY23 to [expand supportive services](#) to 300 scattered site and development units for highly vulnerable individuals and families with persistent obstacles to maintaining housing stability.

The Foundation looks forward to continuing its work with policymakers, nonprofits, and residents to develop effective long-term policies that ensure all Connecticut residents have access to quality, affordable housing in higher opportunity neighborhoods.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact our staff at [policy@hfpg.org](mailto:policy@hfpg.org) or 860-548-1888.

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